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UNFPA COUNTRY-PROGRAMMING APPROVAL PROCESS

Report of the Executive Director

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted to the Executive Board in response to decision 97/12 which, inter alia, requested that the operation of arrangements set forth in the decision be reviewed and a report be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session 2000.

2. Decision 97/12 requested that in its programming process UNFPA take into account the following, bearing in mind the need to limit the administrative burden:

(a) That during the Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) process, UNFPA will offer briefings at the field level for interested parties on the emerging findings;

(b) That UNFPA will make available the summary of the PRSD process (the country recommendations), which will show: (i) proposed strategic actions and their rationale; (ii) the comparative advantage of UNFPA and its complementarity vis-à-vis other actors; and (iii) possible thematic areas, drawing throughout also on lessons learned from other programmes;

(c) That the country recommendation will be made available by the secretariat to all members of UNFPA, upon request, who may offer views on the recommendations, within six weeks of transmission, which the secretariat will take into account in further developing the programme; UNFPA will inform the Executive Board of this process; these views will also be made available to all members of UNFPA, upon request; UNFPA may, if needed, arrange a discussion at headquarters with the participation of the programme country.

3. The decision sought to streamline the Fund's programming process, while putting in place a mechanism that would allow all members of UNFPA (hereinafter referred to as member countries) to participate more effectively and at an earlier stage in the design of UNFPA country programmes. In the decision, the Executive Board decided that country programmes would be considered for approval by the Board without discussion unless one was requested by more than one member, in writing, in principle two weeks before the session. Decision 97/12 also requested that country programmes presented to the Executive Board contain clear statements of purposes, deliverables (for each subprogramme area), financial parameters and the indicators by which UNFPA will measure programme performance, effectiveness and impact. Further, it recommended that the efforts of working towards harmonized arrangements for country programme processes in the United Nations system should, when possible, be coordinated with other funds and programmes.

4. The present report provides an overview of the Fund's current programming process in section II; section III delineates lessons learned; section IV outlines the progress made in relation

to harmonization goals as called for in decision 97/12; section V presents conclusions; and section VI contains a recommendation.

5. In preparing this report, UNPFA analysed inputs from various sources. In December 1999, UNFPA undertook a survey to review the application of specific aspects of its new programme guidelines, including the arrangements for developing and approving country programmes in-house, and for involving member countries in this process. The survey involved all those country offices that had developed new country programmes since the adoption of decision 97/12 in May 1997. Of the 43 concerned country offices, 38 responded. The information provided served as a key input to the present report. It should be noted that the survey results indicated that several country offices had initiated the preparatory programming process prior to the issuance of the new programming guidelines in November 1999.

6. Since the issuance of the programme guidelines in 1997, UNFPA headquarters has invited comments from the users of the guidelines in an effort to improve the quality of these programming tools. These comments constituted another input to the present report. Furthermore, operational concerns, inter alia, have been discussed in subregional meetings and other fora, and a mechanism has been put into place in UNFPA to receive and systematically review comments from various units of the Fund, both at headquarters and in the field, on areas that may require further consideration in improving the policies and procedures of UNFPA programming. In addition, the Policy Application Reviews (PARs) undertaken by the Fund's Office of Oversight and Evaluation (OOE) as well as the country feasibility studies undertaken by the Office for Results-based Management (ORM) as part of a wider effort to identify the institutional needs of the Fund in the context of implementing a results-based approach and the multi-year funding framework (MYFF), have provided invaluable inputs into this ongoing process. Inputs were also derived from the Fund's desk review, in 1999, of the application of the logical framework (logframe) approach in the programme process.

II. PROGRAMMING PROCESS

7. UNFPA introduced its new programming guidelines in 1997 as part of an initiative to review and revise all of its policies, procedures and guidelines in response to the need to: (a) reflect the programmatic changes resulting from the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); and (b) develop basic tools to effectively decentralize programming responsibilities to the field. UNFPA was confronted with the challenge of developing new guidelines that would allow a certain measure of flexibility in different country situations, while ensuring programme oversight and accountability. The guidelines needed to be brief, concise and user-friendly tools that would help operationalize programmes effectively and respond to the United Nations system-wide reform initiatives, including the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

8. The PRSD exercise was thus recast as the Country Population Assessment (CPA), retaining the same objectives as the PRSD but incorporating certain conceptual and procedural changes. The CPA consists of an in-depth analysis of the country situation in the areas of population, reproductive health and gender and recommends strategic actions for addressing critical needs in these areas. It establishes the framework for the development of the UNFPA-assisted country programme. Where the CCA and UNDAF exercises adequately cover UNFPA core programme areas and provide a sound basis for developing the UNFPA-assisted programme, the CPA need not be extensive or undertaken at all, depending on the individual circumstances.

9. The CPA is designed to be a much more nationally owned process than its predecessor, the PRSD, with the preparatory activities commencing shortly after the mid-term review (MTR) of the country programme, leading up to the establishment of a CPA national working group approximately 24 months prior to the end of the ongoing country programme. The CPA national working group is normally chaired by the government and involves the participation of key stakeholders, including civil society, United Nations partners, and representatives of member countries of the Fund. Over the course of the exercise, external inputs are sought from various sources at appropriate intervals to review the work programme of the working group. This includes inputs from the Fund's Country Technical Services Teams (CSTs) and relevant units of UNFPA headquarters. Moreover, the UNFPA Representative in-country convenes periodic meetings between the CPA working group and United Nations system partners, the donor community and other member countries of the Fund to apprise them of the status of the CPA. At the end of the exercise, an independent external review is undertaken of the draft CPA report. This review, however, need not necessarily involve an external mission. The CPA national working group, along with the UNFPA Representative, then holds briefings with key stakeholders on the main findings and recommendations of the CPA.

10. In line with decision 97/12, UNFPA regularly informs member countries of the CPAs planned for the year and, upon request, makes available to member countries of the Fund the draft CPA recommendations for external assistance.

11. The country programme development process focuses on the priorities identified in the CCA, UNDAF and CPA and on the Fund's role in addressing those priorities in relation to its United Nations partners and the donor community, based on the concept of comparative advantage. In setting the priorities for the UNFPA-assisted programme, the UNFPA Representative, in collaboration with the Government of the programme country, consults with a variety of stakeholders, taking into account any inputs received, including from member countries of the Fund, the CST and UNFPA headquarters.

12. In preparing the country programme proposal, the lessons learned from past UNFPA-supported programmes are carefully taken into account. The country programme is designed on the basis of a logframe that identifies the planned results that the programme will achieve or contribute to, and the indicators that will measure progress towards these results, while at the same time identifying the assumptions and risks in the programming context, drawn from lessons learned in the previous programme cycle. Prior to submitting the draft proposal to UNFPA headquarters for consideration, the proposal is reviewed in-country by an inter-agency group, chaired by the United Nations resident coordinator, to ensure consistency with the UNDAF. The UNFPA Representative normally presents the country programme, along with the logframe matrix, to the Programme Review Committee (PRC) at UNFPA headquarters approximately five months prior to submission to the Executive Board.

13. Following approval of the country programme by the Executive Board, the UNFPA Representative further develops the subprogrammes and related component projects, taking into account the recommendations provided by the Board. The consultation process continues at the country level with the review of all subprogrammes by a Local Appraisal Committee, which is an advisory body at the country level composed of the government and other key stakeholders.

14. The final subprogrammes and related component project documents are therefore the products of an extensive process of consultation and consensus building, intended to promote national ownership of the programme as well as to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the design of the programme, while mobilizing support and securing commitments for its implementation.

15. The format of the country programme proposal to the Executive Board has evolved over the years in response to the guidance provided by the Board. The current format is considerably shorter than in the past and covers the main aspects of the CPA, an analysis of the current programme including the lessons learned, and the proposal for the new country programme. The proposal provides an outline of the overall goals and purposes of the programme, as well as the outputs expected at the end of the programme cycle and their indicators, with information on the subprogrammes, the strategic approaches adopted, the institutional arrangements for implementing the programme, financial parameters, the principal risks and assumptions, and the monitoring and evaluation plans.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

16. The feedback and information gathered from various sources indicates that overall the programme guidelines have been well received. However, some country offices have underscored the need for flexibility in the application of the guidelines. They have also pointed out that the process of developing and approving programmes is somewhat lengthy and needs to be simplified. This is due in part to the emphasis on national ownership of the programming

process and its participatory nature, both of which are indispensable to effective programming but require considerable time and planning. Also, consideration must be given to building national capacities to assume leadership of the process and to orienting national counterparts on the new programming approaches and tools. In addition, various stakeholders need to be more closely involved at critical stages of the programming process.

17. National ownership and participation. The overall findings reveal that the shift from the PRSD to the CPA process has had positive outcomes. While the PRSD exercise consisted mainly of an external mission that worked in collaboration with the Government of the programme country for a duration of three to four weeks, the CPA exercise, with the establishment of the national working group, strengthens national ownership, helps build capacity and promotes cost efficiency. The early planning of the CPA exercise, during the MTR of the ongoing country programme, allows for timely improvements in the preparatory phase, such as in determining what information is needed for the assessment. Further, the CPA process provides greater opportunities for the participation of various stakeholders.

18. Some members of the Executive Board have observed that the CPA exercise has inadvertently reduced the opportunities for member countries to participate in the process. Whereas the PRSD exercise culminated in an external mission, composed of national and international experts, to which interested members of the Fund would be invited to participate in, the CPA exercise does not necessarily entail an external mission. Indeed, the survey found that 12 country offices decided not to organize an independent external review of the CPA report. Of the 26 country offices that did organize an external review, only 3 reported that the external review involved an external mission. A few Executive Board members have participated in external missions. The remaining country offices opted for a desk review involving CSTs and/or UNFPA headquarters. In a significant number of cases, however, external inputs were received during the course of the CPA exercise; 28 country offices held in-country discussions in a wider forum, of which 22 reported the participation of member countries; and 19 received inputs prior to the finalization of the CPA report.

19. All 38 country offices that responded to the survey on the programming process had officially notified national counterparts and United Nations system partners of the CPA plans, and 24 of those country offices had informed local representatives of member countries, including the donor community. Thirty-two country offices reported having established a CPA national working group, which in most cases consisted of government representatives and national experts; 17 country offices reported the participation of United Nations partners in the CPA, and 9 reported the participation of member countries, mostly donor countries.

20. The survey also found that NGO participation was relatively high, with 30 country offices reporting having received inputs from NGOs during the process. By contrast, the

involvement of Bretton Woods institutions was low, with only 5 country offices reporting such involvement.

21. The country programme development process has evolved since the issuance of the new programme guidelines in 1997. National ownership of the programme development process is stronger in part due to the CPA process. Similarly, the level and extent of participation of various stakeholders appears to be linked to the momentum created during the CPA exercise. For example, the programme development phase tends to involve fewer partners; however, as programme priorities for the UNFPA country programme emerge, so do the main stakeholders. The key players in the development of the country programme are typically the government counterparts, the UNFPA country office and the CSTs. UNFPA headquarters tends to get involved at a later stage, prior to the submission of the country programme proposal to the PRC. However, the time required for consultation during the process is frequently underestimated, and greater attention needs to be placed on the planning and management of programming processes in the Fund.

22. Optimizing involvement. Compared to the PRSD, the CPA exercise provides many more opportunities for members of the Fund to participate in the process. What may not always be clear to interested member countries, however, is when and how they can get involved. Further, for those that do participate at the country level, it is not clear if, and how, the outcome of this involvement is shared with their respective representatives on the Executive Board.

23. UNFPA regularly informs member countries of its CPA plans as called for in decision 97/12. In response to the survey, 9 country offices reported sharing the CPA recommendations, on request, with interested member countries, and 6 of the 9 country offices received inputs in return. In addition, 28 country offices held in-country briefings on the main findings and recommendations of the CPA report. Moreover, UNFPA records at headquarters show that, in accordance with decision 97/12, at least five member countries formally requested the CPA recommendations of country programmes scheduled for consideration by the Executive Board at upcoming sessions. If more member countries made use of this option, it would secure and expand the involvement of the Executive Board at a critical stage of the programming process.

24. With regard to the involvement of United Nations system partners in the programme development process, coordination efforts have been somewhat ad hoc. According to the survey, 17 country offices reported that an inter-agency group reviewed the country programme proposal. Those country offices that did not organize such an in-country review noted their reasons for not doing so. For example, some noted that they shared the proposal with United Nations system partners but did not always receive their inputs. Others said that a joint review was not necessary as inputs were provided during the process; still others noted that a joint review would be more appropriate at a later stage, during the formulation of subprogrammes and related component projects.

25. It was also found that bilateral donors tend to get involved at a later stage of programme development, when it is possible to identify specific programme areas that may receive bilateral support. Seven country offices reported the involvement of member countries, including potential donors in the development of the country programme.

26. Logframe approach. The quality of country programme proposals seems to have improved considerably since 1997. The issuance of guidelines for the development of country programmes, covering the process as well as the format and content of the proposals, has contributed to the improvement. Moreover, UNFPA provides regular feedback to all staff, both in the field and at headquarters, on the guidance provided by the Executive Board to improve the quality and content of country programme proposals, including, most recently (at the first regular session 2000), the need to provide information in each programme proposal on reproductive health commodities security. As a result of these efforts, greater attention is now being given to identifying the comparative advantage of the Fund; lessons learned are better reflected in the proposed programmes; the use of the logframe and subprogrammes has led to a more coherent programme approach; and the programme focus and strategic interventions have been sharpened, based on parameters that tend to be more realistic in relation to the deliverables and capacities to implement. Moreover, there is a closer link between the scope of programme activities and the Fund's resource allocation system as well as the availability of supplementary resources.

27. In its review of the application of the logframe approach in the programming process in a small sample of countries, UNFPA found that, where used properly, the logframe substantially improved the quality of programme design. In these cases, the new country programmes clearly identified programme priorities and deliverables, delineated a coherent package of strategic interventions, and placed emphasis on monitoring and reporting requirements. However, the logframe approach had not always been applied to best advantage, either conceptually or institutionally. For example, the review found that at the initial stage many UNFPA users did not fully appreciate the potential of the logframe as a basic tool for designing, monitoring and managing programmes. UNFPA may have underestimated the resources required to effectively integrate the logframe approach into programming operations. The quality of training, delivered through a cascade approach, was at times uneven, and the logframe guidelines were not always sufficiently user-friendly. As a result, several country offices did not properly use the logframe for designing country programmes. UNFPA has been addressing these shortcomings, and the application of the logframe approach has improved over time.

28. Conceptually, it was found that the logframe terminology was not always well understood, particularly with reference to defining the goals and purposes of the country programme. Neither was the cause-and-effect relationship between the hierarchy of aims always clearly understood by all. The selection of indicators was at times inappropriate in relation to the

programme's aim; indicators were not always quantified; and inadequate consideration was given to the availability of data. Further, the programme environment, in terms of identifying the risks and assumptions, did not receive sufficient attention. The review also found that the logframe matrix, once prepared, was not systematically updated and used for monitoring purposes. These findings were consistent with the country feasibility studies undertaken by UNFPA in connection with the development of the MYFF.

29. Quality improvement. In response to these findings, UNFPA will increase training activities and develop improved and interactive training modules. The Fund will work towards enhancing technical and operational capacities of UNFPA staff and national counterparts. UNFPA will also revise the guidelines, where necessary, to help clarify conceptual issues. Further, better guidance will be provided on the selection of indicators and data collection methodologies, and greater support will be given for the establishment of baseline data as part of the country programme for monitoring and measuring progress of programme outputs. These efforts will be part of the Fund's thrust towards results-based management, given that the logframe is one of the principal tools for implementing the MYFF. Country offices have therefore been encouraged to review their logframes and to use the matrix as a dynamic tool for measuring progress and managing performance in the implementation of country programmes. The Fund is currently reviewing its programme guidelines to consider how it can better integrate and operationalize the results-based approach to programme planning and management and to monitoring and evaluation, so as to align existing tools and systems towards results and the implementation of the MYFF.

30. Further, to promote the systematic participation of key stakeholders, including member countries, in the programming process, UNFPA will post its programme preparation plans on its web site. Currently, these plans are prepared to serve the internal programme planning and management needs of the Fund. The plans provide information on the tentative scheduling (timing and duration) of major programming exercises of each programme country, covering the CCA and UNDAF, the CPA (if needed), and the session the country programme will be submitted to the Executive Board. In addition, in preparing country programme proposals, UNFPA will organize, in collaboration with the government, an in-country strategy meeting involving all interested parties, including member countries, in order to provide an opportunity for meaningful inputs into the design and strategic options of the country programme. The scheduling of the in-country review meetings will henceforth be reflected in the programme preparation plans of the Fund.

IV. PROGRESS ON HARMONIZATION GOALS

31. Decision 97/12 recommended that efforts of working towards harmonized arrangements for country programme processes should be coordinated and harmonized with other funds and programmes. UNFPA has been an active member of the United Nations Development Group

(UNDG) and its Executive Committee in promoting harmonization goals. With the issuance of the CCA and UNDAF Guidelines and the UNDAF Roll-out Plan (i.e., the countries planning to initiate the UNDAF process) in April 1999, UNFPA made a concerted effort to integrate the UNDG strategy planning tools into its programming process -- a possibility that had been foreseen in the Fund's guidelines. The Fund instructed its country offices to replace the CPA exercise with the CCA and UNDAF, provided that the CCA and UNDAF documents adequately cover the Fund's core programme areas and are capable of providing a sound basis for the development of the UNFPA-assisted country programme. It also organized an orientation workshop for headquarters staff and sent selected CST specialists for training at the United Nations Staff College, in Turin, Italy, so that they could assist the United Nations country teams as facilitators in the CCA and UNDAF exercises as well as act as focal points for UNFPA.

32. UNFPA further instructed its country offices to review, with the United Nations country team, plans for the harmonization of programme cycles. To date, the UNDG has achieved harmonization for almost all countries that qualify for harmonization. Progress has been made in other areas as well, including the organization of joint sessions of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, WFP and UNDP/UNFPA; the issuance of a guidance note by the UNDG on common definitions for programming processes and products; the reaching of an agreement on joint mid-term reviews; the harmonization of the biennial support budget presentation of UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF; advances in the area of common services and premises; the strengthening of theme groups and other country team mechanisms; and the undertaking of a number of initiatives in the area of the resident coordinator system.

33. Currently, the UNDG Ad hoc Group on Harmonization and Simplification is developing harmonized procedures for joint MTRs, under the leadership of UNFPA. This is a priority area for the UNDG and represents a significant advancement in the development of tools for joint programming exercises as well as for accelerating monitoring capacities at the country level. As UNDG partners shift towards the results-based management approach, close collaboration is essential in the context of identifying common results to be achieved and appropriate indicators to measure these achievements. Access to and availability of reliable data is a main concern of all development partners, and UNFPA will continue to place emphasis on the need to build national capacities for establishing and maintaining sustainable data systems. The Fund will also focus on sector-wide approaches in line with Executive Board decision 2000/8.

34. The harmonization of the arrangements for approving country programmes by the respective Executive Boards of partner funds and programmes is a relatively involved exercise and will require a review of the role and functioning of each Board, along with the established arrangements for approving country programmes. Each partner organization has its own unique process, which has evolved in response to the requirements of its Board on the one hand, and the mandate, substantive needs, institutional structure, internal mechanisms and resources of the concerned organization, on the other.

35. Under the current arrangements for UNDP, the country cooperation framework (CCF) is prepared in the field by UNDP, in collaboration with the Government, with the participation of key stakeholders. The CCF is reviewed by a local Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), which is jointly chaired by the Government and UNDP and attended by United Nations partners and other stakeholders. Local representatives of the Executive Board member countries are invited to attend the PAC meeting to minimize the need for detailed review of the CCF by the Executive Board. The advice of the PAC is taken into account in finalizing the document. The CCF is then reviewed in headquarters and subsequently submitted to the Executive Board for approval. At the Executive Board, the CCF is approved as submitted without presentation or discussion, unless at least five Board members have informed the Secretariat in writing before the meeting of their wish to bring a particular CCF before the Executive Board.

36. UNICEF has a two-stage approval process. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Government, holds a strategy meeting in-country, involving key stakeholders including local representatives of the Executive Board member countries. A Country Note is then prepared in the field and reviewed by the UNICEF Regional Office. It is presented to the Executive Board for comments approximately one year prior to the commencement of the new programme, and is further developed, taking into account the comments of the Executive Board. The Country Programme Recommendation (CPR) is then submitted to the Board for approval on a no-objection basis, unless discussion is requested by one or more members.

37. UNFPA did not examine the arrangements of the World Food Programme (WFP), since the WFP Executive Board is currently in the process of reviewing its governance mechanisms, including the role, responsibilities and working methods of the Board. The review is an initiative of the Executive Board of WFP, with the establishment of a working group in March 1999 to develop ideas and recommendations for strengthening the governance of WFP. UNFPA reviewed the work in progress and found some very pertinent observations that may warrant the attention of the other governing bodies of the UNDG partner agencies.

V. CONCLUSIONS

38. In reviewing its programming process, UNFPA found many positive features as well as some areas that could be improved. For example, the current process provides Executive Board member countries with several opportunities to be involved at an early stage, particularly at the country level. These opportunities, however, have not been fully utilized. UNFPA regularly informs member countries of its planned CPAs. But only a relatively small number of member countries provided inputs in response to these notifications, although representatives of member countries in-country were more likely to do so than were those from capitals.

39. There are several reasons for this relatively low response rate. For one thing, it is not always clear to representatives of interested member countries, especially those in capitals, when and how to get involved in the UNFPA process, particularly following the shift in UNFPA programming from a PRSD to a CPA approach. It is also not always clear if, and how, participants in various exercises share the outcome of their involvement with their representatives on the Executive Board. Furthermore, different stakeholders tend to get involved in the process at different stages -- fewer at the early stages of programme development, and more, including bilateral donors, at later stages when priorities emerge and specific programme areas can be identified for support.

40. The review of the current process suggests that the most significant improvement needed at both the country and headquarters level is to find ways to secure member-country involvement at key stages of the programming process, while at the same time ensuring national ownership of the process. In order to promote such national ownership, UNFPA Representatives will make every effort to ensure that CPA national working groups are established in all programme countries. They will also conduct in-country discussions and briefings on the CPA process and involve all interested parties in the in-country strategy meetings. This will give members of the Fund various opportunities to provide guidance on the design and strategic directions of the country programme prior to its review at UNFPA headquarters. It is expected that local representatives of Executive Board member countries will communicate their inputs and views to their respective capitals.

41. At the heaquarters level, UNFPA will make every effort to promote the involvement of key stakeholders at various stages in the development of the programmes. The Fund will post on the UNFPA web page the programme preparation plans of each programme country, including the tentative timing and duration of major programming exercises. This should facilitate the involvement of member-country representatives in-country as well as those in capitals. UNFPA will also impress upon its country offices the need to involve members of the Fund in CPA exercises. The Fund will continue to solicit comments from member countries on the recommendations of its CPAs, which will be taken into consideration in finalizing the country programme. In addition, the Fund will institutionalize informal briefings at headquarters for members of the Fund on the country programme proposal prior to its consideration in the Executive Board. This will promote dialogue on the priorities and strategies of the programme and help build consensus on key issues and areas. UNFPA will also make the independent external review of the draft CPA mandatory, although the modality for undertaking the review may vary from country to country.

42. It is expected that in future the inter-agency review process will be more systematic as the UNDG partners continue to streamline programming processes and tools as part of the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives, in particular with the introduction of the CCA and UNDAF processes. UNFPA will continue to work with its UNDG partners to

reduce the administrative burden of such processes on country offices and national counterparts. The Fund will also work with its partners to ensure that population, reproductive health and gender concerns are adequately addressed in the CCA and UNDAF exercises, with the aim of integrating the CPA and the CCA and UNDAF to the maximum extent possible. It is likely in the immediate future, however, that in most cases UNFPA will find it necessary to undertake a modified CPA exercise to supplement the information and provide the in-depth analysis of the population situation and recommendations for strategic actions needed to develop the UNFPA-assisted country programme. The Fund will, in particular, take special care to ensure that adequate attention is devoted in these exercises to the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action that were agreed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on ICPD+5.

43. Finally, UNFPA plans to make optimal use of its MYFF to report on selected results at the goal and output levels of UNFPA-supported programmes. The MYFF provides a framework for setting priorities and strategic approaches of the Fund and for overseeing the management of programming operations. UNFPA proposes to report to the Executive Board annually on progress towards achieving results and on the status of financial implementation of the MYFF, covering all programmes approved by the Board. The MYFF thus provides an essential mechanism for the Board to fulfil its oversight role and for UNFPA to ensure accountability in the overall performance and management of the programmes it supports. It also has considerable potential for rationalizing the reporting requirements of the Fund, which have substantially increased over the last decade without necessarily promoting increased accountability.

44. With these considerations in mind, UNFPA proposes to maintain the current arrangements for approving country programmes as set forth in decision 97/12, with the improvements recommended in this document and summarized in this conclusion.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

45. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the report as contained in document DP/FPA/2000/11 and maintain the current arrangements for approving country programmes, with the improvements summarized in the conclusion of the report.

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